

Arkansas Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Initiative

Early Care and Education Work Group--

November 29, 2005 - 1 - 3 p.m.

Members Present: Kelly Alexander, Donna Alliston, Tammie Byrum, Diane Courson, Deborah Gangluff, David Griffin, Jana Gifford, Karen Marshall, Vicki Mathews Martha Reeder, Sandra Reifeiss, Kathy Stegall, Dan Sullivan, Ratha Tracy, Jody Viet-Edrington, Cara Walloch and Paula C. Watson.

Regrets: Thelma Jasper, Linda Russell, and Vicki Shelby,

Sandra Reifeiss called the meeting to order. The group made self-introductions.

Agenda Item #1: QRS Update - Martha Reeder and Deborah Gangluff

Discussion: It was reported that the QRS sub-group has accomplished a lot in the past six month. The components decided upon by this group were studied using six states, out of ten, that have implemented the QRS. These states were chosen because their system was more in line with the Arkansas structure. The Building Block system was chosen, meaning that everything in one level must be completed before advancing to the next level.

The broad categories for the measures came from the United Way, Success by Six, Stair Steps to Quality, by Anne W. Mitchell. This document is located on the website. Stair Steps to Quality is a tool kit to facilitate the process of building a quality rating scale. Arkansas had already identified basic components when this document came out. There are some common elements to all QRS systems. The Early Care and Education Work Group had done its homework, and when we compared what we had put together, it was very similar. We had already approved most of the performance measures that we wanted included in the QRS.

The group was reminded that this is a **DRAFT**, a "work in progress." Once the different steps are completed and the product is finished, we will then be able to share publicly and get as much feedback as possible.

As we worked, there were some issues that we did not know quite what to do with, and we placed these items into "the parking lot." As terms, words, or ideas came up, we started listing a *glossary of terms* that needed to be identified further.

In Level 3, 4, and 5, there are still some questions, and the sub-group is continuing to look at them. In the meeting held this morning, the QRS group worked on child/staff ratios and group size.

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Agenda Item #1, Continued: QRS Update - Martha Reeder and Deborah Gangluff

Discussion: The remaining component is Parent/Family/Community (Collaboration). This involves recommendations from the combined Family Support and Parent Education Work Groups and the Joint Medical Home and Social-Emotional Health Work Groups. These recommendations will be considered at the January 11, 2006, meeting.

In the handouts you will find the completed draft copies of the five measures worked on at the October Retreat.

Level 1 on every component indicates that a program would apply to be in the path of self-improvement. To receive one star a program must be in good standing with regular licensure, file a letter of intent to proceed with program improvement, and then a self-study packet would be sent with guidance for pathway to quality.

Level 2, as we begin to look at all the components, there will be a baseline environmental rating scale (ERS) in the program. Based on the results of the ERS, a program improvement plan will be provided. The administrator must have some ERS and Arnett training. Level 2 represents baseline assessment.

Level 3, under Program Evaluation, there is a required ERS score and a number of other items. The big indicators now start to kick in. Levels 4 and 5 are essentially more intensive versions of indicators identified at Level 3. All information is posted as quickly as possible on the website. There is a little click button that says, "contact us." Any comments are taken, combined, and brought back to the sub-group.

The QRS sub-group works towards consensus. Sometimes, it is not possible to have consensus, but we try to work in a congenial manner, listening to the concerns of all persons involved. We have not specifically looked at *costs*. Costs are being studied and considered as we go along.

There are ten states that have already completed and implemented the QRS system. There are probably ten or more other states working on QRS. There are steps to be followed in designing a system according to the toolkit, Stair Steps to Quality, used to help guide us through this process:

1. Pinpoint the standards.
2. Determine how to hold folks accountable—standards have to be possible and measurable.
3. Financing and incentives (reimbursement, staff compensation, etc.)

There is also a need to have a large public relations campaign to help educate parents as consumer and providers.

Agenda Item #1, Continued: QRS Update - Martha Reeder and Deborah Gangluff

Discussion: Jody Viet-Edrington mentioned the UALR Survey that is presently being conducted. We want every program to be successful and go through the QRS system. The Public Relations Campaign will help bring together all parties.

Other comments included:

- There is so much effort from so many people; no one wants to see anything but the best possible success. When the group arrives at the point of identifying financial costs, this group will come up with a plan that is feasible.
- We don't want to be in the situation of some states that have written their plan but have been unable to implement it.
- The sub-group was charged with defining quality and that is what the QRS group is trying to do. We work on one measure at a time. There is some expectation that this task is going to be finished in a timely manner.
- The cost analysis will be completed when the standards are clearly defined and we are able to talk concrete terms.
- Before this process is completed, we may be revisiting all of the measures.

Martha Reeder requested the Work Group to review the five performance measures and the parking lot handouts and express any additional concerns to her as soon as possible.

Diana Courson expressed a desire to see a sheet with all of the Level 2 items for each performance measure on the same page. Levels 3, 4, and 5 would also be done. Martha Reeder agreed to provide this information on the website.

The Child/Staff Ratio and Group Size performance measure from the QRS morning meeting was reviewed. After discussion, it was decided that this measure would probably require further tweaking by the QRS group.

Ratha Tracy expressed that we need to decide what we define as "quality" and then spend time with the legislature, parent groups, and other interested parties in order to finance the measures. There is a need to get the programs some money to make quality happen.

Kathy Stegall indicated that all 50 states had been studied and Arkansas is one of five states that have a 1-6 ratio for minimum licensing.

Jody Viet-Edrington stated that providers need to get behind the proposal and state, "This is what we want."

Martha Reeder indicated that before the folks in North Carolina kicked off their effort, they used big billboards at the entrance of the capitol.

Agenda Item #1, Continued: QRS Update - Martha Reeder and Deborah Gangluff

Discussion: David Griffin expressed that out of this process, he hopes it encourages private providers to get behind the program. There has to be a concerted effort.

Jana Gifford shared with the group that it has been only in the last few years that Child Development, Inc., has been able to reduce the child/staff ratio.

The review of the other performance measures continued. Under staff compensation, it was noted that several issues were deferred to a later date. Each measure was reviewed in depth and some things were identified for further study and discernment by the QRS sub-group.

Paula Watson was requested to send out information about ARNETT to each member of the committee.

Karen Marshall stated that she felt that approved curriculum should begin at Level 3.

Kathy Stegall agreed to bring ELLCO materials to the next meeting.

Agenda Item #2: State Plan - Martha Reeder

Discussion: Martha Reeder reminded the Work Group that the State Plan is to come out of the Systems Planning project. The logic model was reviewed. Martha stated that she wants every person around the table to understand that any strategic plan related to 0 - 5 should be in the System Planning. Whatever entity that each member represents on this group should be represented in the logic model. She asked the question, "What helps children to be ready to be a success in school?"

There are 49 states participating in the systems planning. Martha has reviewed the plans of all of the approved states. She mentioned the Iowa Plan. She took a snapshot of the logic model and identified how Arkansas was doing with each item in the logic model. Martha asked the workgroup to go back and review the other items in light of agencies represented and any goals that tie into this. Martha will be working with the chairs of each group to decide the next steps that need to be taken.

She stated that the logic model for each group will probably be reviewed and a portion of the State Plan will be based on that information.

At the grantee meeting, the grantor indicated that the plan needs to be in place by June 2006. Martha indicated that she would like to see everything down on paper by April 2006. Many of the concerns have already been identified. There are lots of differences between states. We want to be sure that we do not overlook things that should be presented. Martha anticipates providing this group with samples from other states.

Sandra Reifeiss stated that she feels pretty good about what has been done, except for one thing - transitioning

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Agenda Item #2, Continued: State Plan - Martha Reeder

Discussion: Jana Gifford provided information related to Transitioning from Child development, Inc. The first thing they do is hold a meeting with the staff. They work with parents and pre-school on transitioning. They help the parents go the next step. They also go with the parents to look at school, etc. It took several years for this program to be developed. Each center should develop it's own plan.

Agenda Items #3: Miscellaneous Comments - Adjournment - Next Meeting Date

Discussion: The following comments were made by various work group members:

- It now looks like a tool kit will be designed for every level.
- The Early Childhood Foundation Trust Fund and Community Coalitions have not been worked on.
- Tax breaks need to be part of the overall incentives. It needs to be built into the QRS program.
- Another small group may be needed to look at the above two items.
- We are looking at the Promising Practice Sites securing community partners.
- The Medical Home Work Group is looking at sponsoring a meeting with Pediatricians. It was suggested that Nurse Practitioners do a better job of monitoring children.
- Karen Marshall volunteered to send copies of the national model from the Jacksonville Health coalition.
- Martha Reeder stated that anything on the logic model that is not clear needs to be revised.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

RESULTING TASKS AND ASSIGNMENTS:

- Martha Reeder agreed to provide information showing each performance measure at each level on the same page on the website.
- Paula Watson is to send out information about ARNETT to each member of the committee and have posted on the QRS website.
- Kathy Stegall agreed to bring ELLCO materials to the next meeting.
- Karen Marshall volunteered to send copies of the national model from the Jacksonville Health coalition.